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LIFESTYLE COLUMNISTS

Books help ease back-to-school transition

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Summer vacation is nearing an end and parents and kids are gearing up for the return to school. Families will be headed to the stores for pencils, paper and perhaps some new clothes or a computer. Amid all of the preparation, feelings of anxiety can surface, especially in the youngest students.

The Abilene Public Library has lots of great books that can help ease a few fears and might even bring a smile.

For the preschool crowd, "What to Expect at Preschool," by Heidi Murkoff, is just what the doctor ordered. This colorful title shows young readers around a typical preschool classroom. Emphasis is placed on the fun activities that take place in the class.

Another great offering is "Ready, Set, Preschool!," by Anna Jane Hays. This title is a collection of simple stories, poems and picture games that will help youngsters prepare for that all-important first day.

"Countdown to Kindergarten," by Alison McGhee, is a fun title for kids who have fears about school. This story features a worried preschooler who fears she will be unable to go to kindergarten unless she learns to tie her shoes (a major task!).

School anxiety can strike adults, too. In "It Happens to Everyone," by

Bernice Myers, both Michael and a new teacher get the jitters. Michael worries that his teacher will be horrible, while the teacher worries that his students will not like him. With a little help from Michael's mother and the teacher's wife, both newbies overcome their fears and head off to school.

There are great books that introduce the workers found in schools. In "The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School," by Laura Murray, a freshly baked gingerbread man sets off through school in search of his classmates. He meets the coach, a teacher, the nurse and eventually winds up visiting with the principal, who informs the misguided cookie that everyone has been looking for him and settles him back into his classroom.

A fun book showing the different parts of school is Eric Litwin's "Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes." Pete the Cat has become a favorite of kids and librarians alike. In this adventure, Pete wears his school shoes while visiting the library, the cafeteria, the playground and more. A rocking song keeps the story moving along.

If your little scholar is facing a bus ride to school, there are several fun books on that topic. "Riding the School Bus With Mrs. Kramer," by Alice Flanagan, is a great introduction to the big yellow bus. Illustrated with photographs, the reader follows Mrs. Kramer, a safe and careful driver, as she gets the kids to school on time and returns them home at the end of the day.

Another great bus book is "Safety on the School Bus," by Lucia Raatma. It gives kids practical tips on getting on and off the bus and staying safe while riding to school.

One final offering is "Go Home, Mrs. Beekman," by Ann Stampler. In this fun book, Emily is so nervous about starting school that she makes her mother promise to stay with her forever. But after she settles in and finds a friend, she and her teacher have a hard time convincing Mrs. Beekman to stay at home.

For facing first-day jitters, riding the bus or learning about school workers, the Abilene Public Library has just the book to fit the bill. Check with the librarians for more great titles — and have a great new school year.

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